

God's Twelve Voices that Shaped His People: Malachi **Adult Bible Class**

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Introduction

Living messages of the OT prophets

Background of text, social setting, and prophet provides parallels in our day

Points of interest

The last of the prophets, his name means "my messenger." The LXX (Septuagint) treats his name as a common noun, leaving the book without specific author, although the book title in the LXX is Malachias.

The personality of the prophet is entirely unknown.

Historical setting

The date of Malachi is determined by the content of the book rather than from specific references in the opening lines, as in other prophets.

It is a time of careless priests (1:6-2:9), skepticism (2:17; 3:14), and intermarriage (2:11-16).

The temple is apparently complete and sacrifices are being offered (1:7-10). Judah is under a governor (1:8) and Edom has been destroyed (1:1-5).

These are conditions similar to those faced by Nehemiah (5:14; 13:10-13).

Textual considerations

Malachi uses a unique style among the prophets in his use of dialectic: (1) assertion, (2) question that is basis of assertion (yet you say), and (3) elaboration of original assertion. One can summarize these as assertion, objection, and rebuttal.

- 1:2,3. I loved you.
- 1:6,7. You despised my name.
- 2:10-16. Judah has been faithless.
- 2:17. You weary the Lord with your words.
- 3:7. You turn from the statutes.
- 3:8. You rob God.
- 3:13. You use stout words.

The Message

In contrast to the wickedness that overruns even God's people, the righteous will see the rising of the sun after a long dark night. Thus, the people should remember the statutes of Moses (4:4) and the promises of God. Among these promises is that Elijah, the prophet, will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children (Mal. 4:5).

Among the sins denounced in Malachi are...

- Moral offenses such as adultery, perjury, oppression, 3:5
- Divorce, 2:16
- Cultic abuses, 1:8

- Skepticism, 3:14f
- Unworthy priests, 2:7-9
- Robbing God, 3:8,9

Influence/Results of Malachi

Malachi is reflected in the NT in Paul (Rom. 9:13, cf. 1:2-3), the Messenger to come (Matt. 11:10, cf. 3:1), and Elijah the prophet (Matt. 11:14, cf. Mal. 4:5f).

Messianic elements:

- Mal. 1:11
- Mal. 4:2
- Mal. 3:1

Questions

How does Malachi speak to religious indifference in our day?

How does Malachi address the marriage-divorce issue? What does he have to say that is helpful today? How does this compare to the teaching of the New Testament?

What does Malachi say about the quality of our offerings to God? Is robbery a common practice today in relationships with God?

What does Malachi say about half-hearted worship?

What does Malachi say to us about the way we worship and what pleases God?

What religious leadership principles do you see in Malachi?